

David M. Walker | 6:05p.m. EDT March 12, 2013

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A man in a dark coat and glasses holds a sign that reads "Sink the Sequester". Another man in a tan coat is visible in the background.

Just as Republicans and Democrats are poised for the next battle to bring down deficits through their budget proposals, a new argument is emerging about the impact of the sequestration. *The New York Times* ([http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/us/politics/cuts-to-achieve-goal-for-deficit-but-toll-is-high.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/us/politics/cuts-to-achieve-goal-for-deficit-but-toll-is-high.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&_r=1&)), among others, is reporting that these forced cuts, combined with other negotiated savings, get us close to the deficit reduction we need — \$4 trillion over the next decade. This is dangerously misleading, whether or not sequestration remains intact in budget negotiations.

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Elected officials must recognize that slashing discretionary spending doesn't treat our fiscal disease. Our elected officials should tell the American people the truth about our fiscal condition and its causes.

Until we fundamentally reform our tax code in a way that brings in more revenue, address demographic trends that threaten our social insurance system, and rein in health care, we can't claim to have achieved deficit reduction in an honest and meaningful way. Meanwhile, the clock is against us: 2014 is an election year for Congress, and a "grand bargain" will be off the table for political reasons. The presidential election cycle kicks in right after. Tough choices will get delayed further.

All of which means that 2013 is the time to act. There is a critical opportunity to speak truth, think big and act bold. Right now, we are getting the opposite from our elected officials.

David M. Walker is former U.S. comptroller general and CEO of the [Comeback America Initiative](http://keepingamericagreat.org/). (<http://keepingamericagreat.org/>)

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